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GESELLSCHAFT FÜR BEDROHTE VÖLKER

Menschenrechtsorganisation für ethnische, rassische und religiöse Minderheiten
society for threatened peoples · association pour les peuples menacés · asociación para la defensa de los pueblos amenazados

To all
East Timor
Solidarity Groups

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Dear friends,

as the Indonesian representative in the UN Decolonisation Committee quoted the German priest Father Seifert as one of the most important eye-witnesses for the "progress" in East Timor, it could be useful for you to know, what we found out about his background.

Father Seifert is a Dominican priest (without living in a monastery). He is working as a teacher in a school close to Colone and his activities in Indonesia, East Timor and other parts of the world are backed by his director who, as Father Seifert himself, is member of the ruling Christian Democratic Union (CDU). When he was in East Timor in December 1985 his trip was backed by his party but not officially by the government or the churches.
After that trip, the Indonesian newspapers said that he is going to find scholarships for East Timorese students (who accept Indonesian passports of course) in Germany. The churches and the government denied that. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said very clearly in a letter to our organization dated 24th. January 1986:
"Father Seifert does not speak in the name of the Federal Government" and in a letter dated 21st. February the Ministry confirms:
"There are no scholarships of the Federal Government for East Timorese".
We don't know whether Father Seifert himself or the Indonesian newspapers were responsible for those wrong informations.

In the past, Father Seifert lived some years in Jakarta as a pastor for the German community. Since that time he has very good relations to the Indonesian military, especially General Murdani. When we had a meeting in the Indonesian embassy in May this year, he expressed his great regret that General Murdani has such a bad international reputation. "He is much better than everybody thinks" Father Seifert said.
He also spent some years in Vietnam and he has very good relation to the government in Hanoi. He strongly supports their proceedings in Kampuchea.

When Father Seifert published the report about his trip to East Timor in December, the churches and the aid agencies were quite upset. We heard from two completely different sources that the diocese of Colone forbad him to go to East Timor again and indeed, he wasn't there this summer although we can prove that he wanted to go there. He wanted to accompany a German journalist delegation. Finally the visit of the whole delegation was canceled.
But his efforts were not completely in vain because one of those journalists, Verena Stern who is working for the Suddeutsche Zeitung which normally is a very liberal, well-informed newspaper, is under his influence.

Beirat:
Carl Amery, München — Prof. Emir Kamuran Bedir Khan (†), Paris — Claus Biegert, München — Prof. Ernst Bloch (†), Tübingen — Pater Adriano Bonfanti, Verona — Gerard Challand, Paris — Dr. Ismet Cherif-Vanly, Lausanne — Claude Deffarge (†), Paris — Prof. Stanley Diamond, New York — Freimut Duve, Hamburg — Richard Erdoes, New York — Brigitte Erler, Bonn — Helmut Frenz, Hoisbüttel — Prof. Helmut Gollwitzer, Berlin — Peter Grubbe, Lütjensee — Richard Hauser, London — Dr. med. Akanu Ibam, Enugu — Evaristo Nugkuag Ikanan, Lima — Prof. Robert Jungk, Salzburg — Dr. Donald Kenrick, London — Pastor Lothar Kühl, Dortmund — Marie Helene Laraque, Yellowknife — Johnny Mohawk, Akwesasne — Prof. Jürgen Moltmann, Tübingen — Jiri Pelikan, Rom (früher Prag) — Leonid Pljuschtsch, Paris (früher Kiew) — Luise Rinser, Rocca di Papa — Romani Rose, Oftersheim — Altbischof Kurt Scharf, Berlin — Prof. Karl Schlesier, Wichita/Kansas — Gordian Troeller, Hamburg — Prof. Ernst Tugendhat, Berlin — Birgitta Wolf, Murnau — Pastor Joachim Ziegenrücker, Hamburg

When she was prevented from going there, she wrote an article from Singapur which was one of the most awful I have ever read in the more liberal (or leftist) press. We made an English translation of it which most of you should have meanwhile.
When I published an article about the background of her information sources in the newspaper of the German Journalist Union (DJU) which strongly supports the case of East Timor, she accused me very much. But in that letter, she really showed her interests. She wrote:
"No (!) journalist who has visited East Timor since January 1976 has ever confirmed the "cruelties of the Indonesian Government" which Mr. Ludwig claims. The only (!) cruelties in East Timor are committed by Fretilin terrorists..."The Feder (that is the name of the journalist union newspaper) has published articles ...which are going to incriminate the relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and Indonesia, degrade the reputation of the Indonesian Government and might cause Indonesia immense harm because they were published when the Indonesian Government is applying for the presidency of the Non-Align-Nations".

As there are rumors that Verena Stern is going to East Timor in January 1987, I would ask all groups to publish the informations we have about her and Father Seifert so that the Indonesian can't say so easily Mrs. Stern is an independent eye-witness.

Everybody who wants to have Mrs. Stern whole five-page-letter (in German unfortunately) can ask me of course.

Best wishes to all of you

Yours Klemens